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THE

Commonweal

The Relevance of Kierkegaard

by James Collins

Peron's Future

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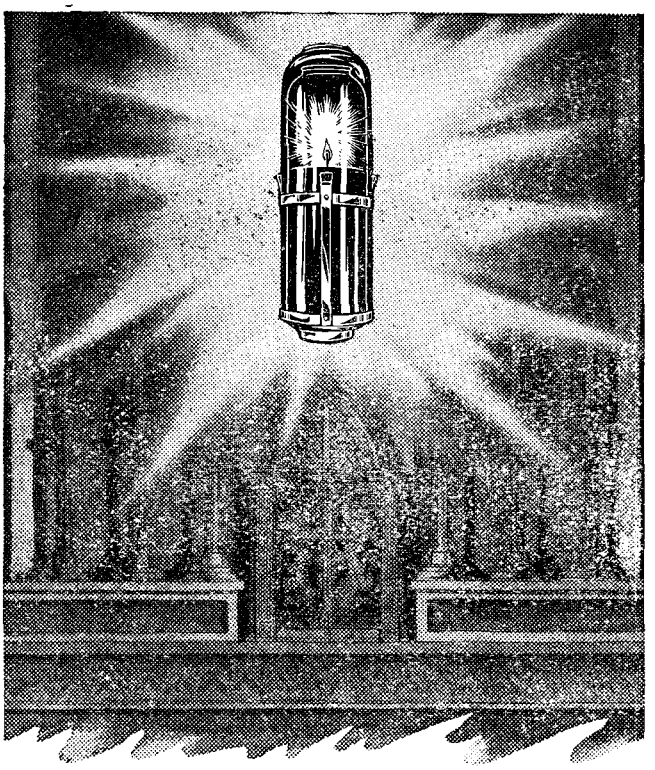

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The Commonweal

week by week

SWEETNESS AND LIGHT

THE long-heralded meeting at the summit is now a fact of history. However one interprets the events at Geneva, there is little doubt that the world is entering a new phase of international relations, and the future of the world depends to a large extent upon a correct analysis of what this new phase means.

As we see it, what has taken place so far represents a change in Soviet tactics—nothing more. The rulers of the Soviet Union offered no compromise on any key point. They put forward no new proposals of any substance. The only new development of any consequence seems to be that the Russians are now prepared to smile us all to death—for whatever else it was, Geneva must surely have been the smiling-est international conference in history.

President Eisenhower apparently has scored the same kind of personal triumph in Europe that he won in the 1952 Presidential elections in America. By sheer force of personality, he managed to capture the imagination of a Europe tired of the rigors of the cold war and constant tension. Unfortunately, his victory seems to have been too much one of personality rather than of principle.

Much of what was said at the conference, it seems to us, will not stand serious analysis. President Eisenhower's surprise proposal that the Soviet Union photograph U.S. military installations while U.S. planes do the same in Russia is one good example. We are amazed at the political phenomenon which permitted an American President to make such an offer; Harry Truman would have risked impeachment if he had suggested such a thing. But beyond noting with satisfaction that the President is free to try things few other Americans would dare, we cannot see how the proposal can be taken seriously. And if it is a new weapon in our psychological warfare campaign, against whom is it directed?

All this is not to say that there was no point in the conference, or that no profit came out of it. But all through the meeting, it seemed to us, the U.S. got off on the wrong foot. President Eisenhower solemnly assured the representatives of the Soviet Union that he would never be a party to aggressive warfare. The Soviet leaders in turn solemnly assured him that they believed his words. This polite exchange was then greeted in the European and American press with great acclaim. Yet does everyone forget so quickly that NATO was a Western response to Soviet aggression? Are people in Europe so naive as to forget that it is not the neighbors of the United States who live in fear of armed subversion and surprise attack? We do not think so.

IF the new rulers in Russia want to change course and genuinely seek peace, perhaps it is good to reassure them that we are not determined to fight them, come what may, as soon as the right time arrives. But we find it hard to believe that the Russians do not know this already. If the leaders in the Kremlin intend a change of policy rather than a switch in tactics, some substantial indication of such a change should be forthcoming. So far there has been not a hint of such a change. Smiles cost the Russians nothing, and the captive peoples are no more free today because Khrushchev fancies himself in the hail-fellow-well-met role.

President Eisenhower told the Soviet leaders that he believed in their peaceful aims. We like to think that in making this statement he was simply carried away by his own rhetoric. Surely we have not forgotten that these are the lords of the slave-labor camps we are dealing with? If Mr. Eisenhower seriously believed what he said, the Western world would be in serious trouble. For the aims of the Soviet Union are not peaceful, and there is absolutely nothing in the record to give the slightest foundation to the President's statement.

The Russians want to be the masters of Europe, while Communist China strives for the mastery

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of Asia. The Soviet leaders want to see NATO dismantled. They want the United States to relax and pull its troops out of Europe. They want to divide the Western alliance and thus deny to the U.S. the use of airbases overseas. They want to lure Germany out of the Western orbit, or if that is impossible, to stall for time until Adenauer's death or retirement.

We favor negotiating with the rulers of the Soviet Union from our position of strength. We oppose relaxing tensions in such a way that the chief beneficiary is Russia. If we cannot make a better bargain than that, the Soviet leaders are not yet ready to negotiate. In that event, the only course open to us is to bring to bear on the Russians every pressure short of world war that is available to us.

The Russians are realists. They were at Geneva for the same reason the United States was there; the H-bomb is too big. It makes cowards of us all, and neither side wants a nuclear war. In such a war there would be no victory; it would settle nothing and would destroy the world we know. The U.S. knows this, and now it seems that the Russians know it too. This is good, and so is the easing of tensions which might accidentally lead to the nuclear war no one wants. But this does not mean that the Russians have changed their long-range goals in the slightest.

Although it was raining when the Eisenhower plane landed, Mr. Nixon would not let the Eisenhower party be met with umbrellas. Asked why, he replied only, "For obvious reasons." Mr. Nixon is, we think, too sensitive. Mr. Eisenhower is not Mr. Chamberlain, we feel sure, and Geneva was not Munich. But the fact that the notion even occurred to the Vice President shows the dangers we face.

In this era, two fundamentally different concepts of man and civilization confront each other. The world may go for thirty, forty, or fifty years half-slave and half-free. It will not go thus forever. The two rival systems are competing, for innate superiority and for the loyalities of men all over the world. Whether the war be cold, lukewarm or hot, it is war—and it will be war until one or the other of the two systems changes its fundamental character. It is our conviction that the values and goals of the free world will prevail—if we do not ourselves betray them first.

NEXT WEEK

WILLIAM PFAFF writes from Egypt about the progress and problems of the new military regime.

"This is an enthusiasts' government. In many ways these men have been in over their heads since 1952. The leaders of the *coup* were mostly staff college professors or young field and staff officers; they had neither the experience nor the training for civil administration. But perhaps that has been an advantage. They have brought something of the austerity and pragmatism of the military into a government which had severely lacked both qualities. What I am saying is that all the good things which can be said about a military dictatorship can be said about this one. If it lasts, keeps its spirit and fulfills its plan for reestablishing parliamentary government, it will have justified the adjectives which its propaganda office generously applies to the junta."

"PROGRESSIVE" CATHOLICS

THE Church's journey through time will always be open to misunderstandings. Especially in her dealings with particular societies and political movements, she will always be open to charges of partisanship and self-seeking—of at one time favoring the left, at another time the right, at still another of not involving herself sufficiently in struggles to which she should be committed.

Thus, in the nineteenth century the Church was accused of betraying the aspirations of mankind by her condemnations of "Liberalism" and "Progress." During the pontificate of Pius XI she was said to have abandoned her best defenders by condemning the *Action Francaise.* And now, since the war, some are bitter toward her for the restrictions she has placed on certain "progressive" Catholic movements in Europe.

These restrictions have been much in the news during the past few years. The priest-worker movement, which some saw as the great hope of the Church in Europe, was disbanded under pressure from Rome; stern warnings have been given against Catholics' collaborating with Communism, and recently several "progressive" Catholic publications in France, Poland and Hungary have been condemned. This leads some to think that the Church is indeed "reactionary," that she has turned her back on any bold attempts to reconcile the Gospel with the social demands of a new society.

In the July 23 issue of *America* Father Robert A. Graham, S.J., shows that exactly the opposite is true. His article points out that it is the denial by certain "progressive" Catholics that the Church has any solution to modern social problems which has lead to their condemnation. Believing th

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Catholic social teaching is inadequate to deal with the social problems of the age, they have looked towards Marxism for their solutions. And since they have sought not a Christian but a Marxist social order, the Church has had no choice but to speak out against them.

As Father Graham points out, however, criticisms of "progressive" Catholics in Europe have no applicability to those engaged in the Christian social apostolate in this country. In Father Graham's words: "The progressist denial of the social doctrine of the Church . . . . is shared by not a few in America, though the latter take this position to exonerate capitalism rather than Communism from religious criticism and evaluations. Thus do apparently contradictory extremes coincide. Basically, the same danger exists in both America and Europe—that of sterilizing the Church's social apostolate. The main difference is that in Europe this danger comes from the extreme Left. Here it comes from the extreme Right."

ATOMIC ENERGY

ATOMIC energy was used for the first time to produce commercial electricity on July 18 in upper New York State. The power that was fed into a commercial system was produced by S.I.R. (submarine intermediate reactor), a prototype of the reactor used in the Seawolf, the atomically powered submarine launched July 21.

Much can be accomplished quickly these days, and one is led to speculate on how long it will be before the production of atomic energy in quantity for civilian uses can come about. It is just a decade since the first use of atomic energy in Japan. Now we come to the end of a phase of its conversion from an agent of terror to an agent of hope for the alleviation of economic deprivation.

One problem that comes to mind is the reception this new form of potentially cheap and abundant energy will receive from the government agencies and workers and owners who will be immediately affected by its increasing importance in our economic life. Some might fear, for example, that capital investment in coal mines will be seriously threatened. Others will take pause at the possibility of widespread technological unemployment. One may rejoice at the prospect that men will no longer have to spend their lives underground in coal mines, but it must be recognised that their transition to other forms of employment will not be an easy one. Then, there is public hydroelectric power program.

The government has a certain duty to see to the economic stability of the country. Part of this role is to attempt to foresee and forestall economic dislocation, such as that which could come about through the radical and swift technological revolution in which we are at this time engaged. Leaders of government and industry and labor must see it as part of their responsibility to formulate plans to match the situation.

CARDINAL MINDSZENTY

NEWS that Josef Cardinal Mindszenty has been released from prison by the Communist government of Hungary is veiled in ambiguity. All we have been told is that the Cardinal's reprieve is temporary and that he will be allowed to live in a Religious institution. It is clear that if he truly is released he remains subject to instant imprisonment at the will of his Communist persecutors. It is clear also that there is more shadow than substance to this gesture by the Hungarian government toward human decency and the good opinion of mankind.

Communist governments, of course, are past-masters of the shadow gesture—of seeming to concede something when they are really conceding nothing. After men have been broken and destroyed they may be allowed to be "free." So it seems in the present case. Josef Cardinal Mindszenty's opposition to the Communist masters of Hungary was broken, his own will to resist was destroyed —and now, we are told, he will be "free." Having accomplished their goal, the Communists can afford such a gesture toward rectitude.

As *L'Osservatore Romano* has said, announcement of this gesture coincides nicely with world Communism's current effort to put a humanitarian face upon tyranny. But in this, as in other areas, the West should not be easily deceived. While we are thankful for any respite in Cardinal Mindszenty's ordeal, we must not mistake a respite for rectification of a historic wrong: this still seems a long way off.

RUSSIAN FARMERS IN IOWA

ALL during the Summit conference the papers ran stories about the Russian farmers out amongst the tall corn of Iowa. There were a lot of photographs showing them smiling and patting hogs and inspecting corn and motoring through the July dust in a long automobile caravan. They came to find out about our methods of agricul-

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ture, but much more than farming technique was at stake.

Everyone knows the story of the Ozark mountaineer who took a Catholic priest up to his mother's cabin, and when the priest took off his hat the boy said, "You see, Ma, he ain't got horns." The old lady looked sharply and shot back, "He's a young 'un; you wait and see!"

A score of Russian farmers, and probably hundreds of American farm people got a look at each other and saw that neither of them had horns. This is a big step forward. On both sides of the "Curtain" molders of public opinion have for too long been attempting to convince their subjects of the diabolic nature of the men on the other side; the situation has deteriorated from decade to decade. Too many on both sides have spoken with apparent satisfaction of the obliteration of the other.

Such efforts as this visit of farmers take one back to the early days of post-Czarist Russia when it was the hope of many oppressed workers and many idealists all over the world. From most of the nations of the earth men and women flocked to make incarnate what they considered to be a new and shining vision. Isadora Duncan was given a palace by Lenin himself in which she was to teach the children of the new land how to dance. Engineers came to build tractor factories and dams, and there was great hope on the part of many.

But the vision went sour, and this is wretched. The workers of the world were going to be free, and it didn't happen. For our part, we believe that the Bolshevist vision was doomed to failure —because it was an evil mirage. And a terrible price in human life had to be paid to dissipate the mirage.

But however ill-founded, whatever hope existed for people to live together and know each other was and will always remain good. Whatever aspirations people have to do good to each other, help each other attain modes of living commensurate with their dignity as human persons, is laudable.

There is little doubt that the rulers on both sides of the curtain had public relations and propaganda "angles" in mind when they permitted the farmers to make their inspection tour. This does not matter. The deed is a good one. The Pope has spoken of how important it is for "the people" of the world to get to know each other, and surely everyone must intuitively grasp this. In a world of tough politics backed by the constant threat of massive destruction, barnyard chats on egg production are not going to have much immediate effect in bringing about a peaceful world. But they do provide just a little hope, and how can you carry on without that?

RACISM IN *THE WANDERER?*

THE Wanderer, a weekly newspaper edited by Catholics and published in St. Paul, Minn., can be depended upon to take an extreme nationalist-isolationist position on almost any question under the sun. It is unrelenting in its antipathy towards "Liberals," "One-Worlders" and "Do-Gooders." Ordinarily, this does not bother us over-much: this paper speaks for a rapidly disappearing aspect of American Catholicism and we feel that it should be permitted to expire in peace. In its July 14 issue, however, *The Wanderer* makes a sound so unpleasant that it cannot be ignored.

The newspaper is currently quite unhappy about the Russian farm experts who came to this country to study American agricultural methods. The villain who brought them here, says *The Wanderer,* was the Cowles publications. In an editorial entitled "Cowles Liberalism" the paper points out that it was a writer for "the Cowles publishing dynasty" who first suggested that the Russians be invited. *The Wanderer* therefore proceeds to attack the whole Cowles publishing venture.

Just look, *The Wanderer* tells its readers, at some of "the warped writers" whom the Cowles publications employ. It offers the July 12 issue of *Look* as an example, for in that issue there is an article called "All About Love" by Julian Huxley. *"Look* doesn't tell you this," *The Wanderer* writes, "but Huxley has some very quaint ideas about mixing races and colors for a 'better world'."

Now, there is room for wide differences of opinion in the Catholic press. There is room, we suppose, for isolationism, McCarthyism, and most of the other hopelessly wrong-headed things a paper like *The Wanderer* stands for. But there is no room for racism or for the language of racism. There is no room for talk about "mixing the races and colors" as though this were an evil thing.

Perhaps we misinterpret *The Wanderer's* intentions. Perhaps the paper does not mean what it seems to mean. We hope this is true. The seemingly racist implications of *The Wanderer's* remarks, however, are so disturbing that an explanation is called for. Racism is one of the scourges of our time—a thing which every Christian must abhor. The mere suggestion of it in a Catholic publication must be challenged. *The Wanderer,* it seems clear, owes its readers either an explanation or an apology for a remark which, in itself, should be grossly offensive to the Christian conscience

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The Relevance of Kierkegaard

"THE DANISH SOCRATES IS NOW PROPOUNDING HIS QUESTIONS AND PRESENTING HIS INSIGHTS TO MEN EVERYWHERE"

JAMES COLLINS

JUST one hundred years ago this coming November, a man was laid at rest in a Copenhagen cemetery. At his own request, there was erected over his grave a marker inscribed with these lines from his favorite religious poet:

'Tis but a little while,
And I have won,
My conflict here on earth
For ever done;
In Paradise at peace
World without end,
With Jesus I'll not cease
To speak, as friend.

The deceased man's name was Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), and he had chosen this verse with great care. It expressed the abiding themes of his own life: a recognition that strife was inescapable for fulfilling his vocation, a keen awareness of the transitory nature of temporal existence and the peace of eternity, confidence in the ultimate triumph of his principles, and a deep longing for the union of friendship with Jesus, who reigns as King only because he is also the victor over time and suffering.

Anyone surveying the fate of Kierkegaard's reputation during the latter half of the nineteenth century would have said that his self-confidence was illusory and his appeal to a future generation quite futile. True enough, he achieved a certain dubious fame as a character in one of Ibsen's plays and as the subject of an essay by the literary critic, Georg Brandes. He also merited a half-comprehending monograph by the philosopher Harald Hoffding, and a paragraph in the more compendious histories. But on the whole, it seemed likely that he would be remembered only faintly as a minor Danish oddity. A curiously tortured soul who had run afoul of the authorities in an obscure quarrel—such apparently would be the notice on his little docket in the cultural history of mankind.

And yet today, that little docket has been expanded into a major file, as Kierkegaard's stature continues to grow in the eyes of the present generation. His voluminous writings have now been translated into all the main languages, excellent biographies have probed into every corner of his life, and there is a mounting tide of useful secondary studies on his thought. In August of this year, a week-long Congress for Kierkegaard Research will be held in Copenhagen, bringing together an international roster of scholars for the official centennial celebration. His influence upon current developments in Protestant theology and the existentialist philosophies is deep and paramount. Two of his books have even been published in paperback format for American readers. The Danish Socrates is now propounding his questions and presenting his insights to men everywhere.

What features of his mind appeal to us as being eminently relevant to our own situation? A few helpful guideposts will indicate some reasons for this quickened contemporary interest in Kierkegaard. His emergence as a major intellectual and spiritual figure is due in large measure to five pertinent facts: his concentration on the problem of man, his use of the descriptive method, his stress on existence, his sense of social crisis, and his defense of ethical and religious values.

ST. Augustine gave voice to a universal human experience when he related that the more he probed into his own nature, the more he became in his own eyes a *magna quaestia,* a gigantic question-mark. We can understand his meaning very well today. For we have brought to bear upon the study of man an unprecedented number of valuable techniques, ranging from statistical analysis and comparative psychology to the approaches of anthropology and history. And yet we have scarcely crossed the frontiers in our exploration of human nature. Kierkegaard was one of the pioneers in this quest for an understanding of man. He likened his own mind to a Chinese puzzle-box, having compartment after compartment concealed within its depths. His

Mr. Collins, a member of the faculty of St. Louis University, is the author of *The Existentialists: A Critical Study,* published last year by Regnery.

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diaries filled several printed volumes with the record of his lifelong effort to grasp the many elusive aspects of his own character and to attain some knowledge of the makeup of other men. He kept sending down the plummet into the abyss of man's being, with all the tenacity and skill of the dedicated searcher.

This self-analysis aligns Kierkegaard with such men as Nietzsche and Gide, who also excelled in the perilous and yet fascinating study of the individual person. At a time when the preponderant amount of power, money, and talent is still being concentrated upon physical investigations, we can find great encouragement for humanistically oriented studies in the example of Kierkegaard. He gives assurance of the worthwhileness of a persistent examination of man, and defends a scale of values in which one's growth in self-comprehension is given a pre-eminent place.

Kierkegaard is insistent, however, that we can lose our grip upon our own humanity and fail to develop our personal being. This can happen whenever we are browbeaten by convention or social sanctions into ceasing to use our intelligence critically in the search for the meaning and rectitude of human life. What Paul Tillich refers to as the courage to be, is in the direct line of spiritual descent from Kierkegaard's teaching that the human spirit is a prize to be won, and not just a plot of land to be fenced around. At the same time, Kierkegaard criticizes the attitude of men who are eager to ask questions, but who are loathe to provide answers or to commit themselves practically to their findings about human nature. What he observes on this score has a pointed bearing upon the question of academic freedom. The raising of questions is not an idle sport to be cultivated for its own sake. The human mind is made for the possession of truth in a practical way, as

well as for the continual search for it. Hence, intellectual inquiry must be measured by the ultimate tendency of the mind to accept and act upon whatever truths are uncovered in the process. Otherwise, one remains in the pathological state of the dreamer, the indecisive mind, or the everlasting skeptic. Kierkegaard's books are filled with sketches of such men, who seek in vain to escape the responsibility for practical adherence to the truths which we can discover about man.

ALTHOUGH he was by no means free from the influence of the dialectical method of idealism, Kierkegaard did some pathfinding work in the descriptive analysis of human situations. Hegel had cultivated the descriptive approach, but for the purpose of showing that nature and human history are phases of the absolute spirit. By way of counteraction, Kierkegaard tried to examine the human individual for his own sake, and not merely to illustrate a thesis about the absolute. His liberation of the descriptive method was a major historical condition for the growth of both phenomenology and realism in the twentieth century. He showed realists how to defend in a convincing manner the ordinary conviction about our ability to know something concerning the real world. He also suggested that we bring back our general notions about man and the world to a firm footing in the direct study of individual things and experienced structures.

There is a much more popular aspect to the use of descriptions in the study of man. Anyone who opens a book by Kierkegaard for the first time is pleasantly surprised to find it brimming with amusing character sketches, accounts of men caught up in moods of despair or melancholy or high elation, illustrations drawn from Shakespeare and Schiller, Goethe and Romantic literature, fragments from imaginary diaries and letters, along with reformulations of familiar Biblical stories. He refers to himself habitually as a thinker and a poet: his thoughts are usually cast in a poetic form which is persuasive and readily intelligible. Kierkegaard seeks to establish contact with readers through images and prospects of earthly beauty. Like Plato, he leads them imperceptibly from engagement in time to contemplation of eternity.

This happy marriage between art and doctrine has helped to shape current existentialism, as witnessed by the plays, novels, and journals of Sartre and Marcel. They have learned from Kierkegaard that a concrete and dramatic presentation opens the way to the human mind and heart. Furthermore, his lifelong preoccupation with the esthetic attitude is a reminder that the artist has gained unique insights and that it is meet for the philosopher to sit at his feet. The Mellon Art Lectures delivered in Washington by Maritain and Gilson contain a detailed bill of particulars of just how great the philosopher's debt to the artist is. It is a legitimate contemporary demand that an adequate philosophy must find a place for man the maker and must illuminate the creative process.

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There is, nevertheless, one serious drawback in a close association between philosophy and art: the distinction between the two runs a chance of being wiped out. Something of this sort seems to be happening in Germany today, not with Heidegger himself but with some of his minor followers. Professor Walter Cerf of Brooklyn College made a recent field trip to the German universities, paying special attention to the teaching of philosophy. Although a sympathetic observer, his findings are somewhat disquieting. He reports that some of the most popular professors are not simply analyzing emotions but emoting, not simply describing the various moods of man but themselves becoming moody. Thereby, philosophy is debased to academic dramaturgy and shorn of its disciplined character.

Kierkegaard would have some acid comments on this abuse. He always distinguished clearly between philosophy and his own moral and religious modes of communication. Moreover, he insisted that even the most concrete and moving descriptive method is not a substitute for action. The men criticized by Cerf have radically departed from Kierkegaard by clouding the distinction between philosophical analysis and moral action.

BECAUSE the importance of existence is becoming a commonplace today, we are apt to forget the revolutionary import of Kierkegaard's original emphasis upon it. Like a probing surgeon, he located unerringly the weakest spot in early nineteenth-century philosophy: the subordination of existence to a minor role in the kingdom of essences. His technique was to ask a few simple but searching questions. Kierkegaard wanted to know where the difference lay between logic and reality, possibility and the actual order. He pointed out that the cardinal distinction lay in the absence or presence of existence.

At this juncture, his relation to contemporary Thomism becomes clear. His criticism of Hegelian philosophy on the grounds of its being anti-existential (even though it treated of existence) was one historical condition for the resurgence of Thomism with a vigor that would have seemed quite inconceivable a century ago. Although he himself despaired of any philosophical way of studying existence, Kierkegaard acted as a spur to the recovery of the existential resources in the philosophy of St. Thomas, as is clear from the section devoted to him in Gilson's *Being and Some Philosophers*. The historical recovery of St. Thomas might otherwise have been carried on in a purely antiquarian or apologetic spirit, without realizing the direct relevance of his thought to contemporary philosophy.

I am not proposing that Kierkegaard is a crypto-Thomist, but only that present-day Thomism is more authentically itself for his critique of idealism and his stress on existence. He provides a solvent for clearing away sedimented layers of the Scholastic manual tradition, with its deforming deposits of rationalism. The need to rethink the meaning of existence in the light of the controversy between the Hegelians

and Kierkegaard has enabled Thomism to recognize its own most distinctive doctrine on the act of existing, with more readiness and urgency than would otherwise be possible.

On the relation between existence and method, there is a sharp divergence between Kierkegaard and American naturalists like Sidney Hook and Ernest Nagel. The latter allow for several techniques in analyzing man, but they ultimately regard these techniques as modes of the single scientific method. For his part, Kierkegaard is an unreconstructed pluralist, and his pluralism extends to total methods and not merely to subdivisions of one method. In addition to the scientific method, he presents a thoughtful and powerful case for a distinctive existential method of studying man as a free, moral agent.

FOR all his concern with states of the individual soul, the Danish thinker was nevertheless a keen social critic. His outward eye was as highly trained as his inward, if not in respect to nature then at least in respect to his fellow men in society. He was the forerunner of social personalism, and a debt to him was acknowledged by Martin Buber and Emmanuel Mounier. He taught them to measure the soundness of a society by the degree to which it fosters personal relations of I-and-Thou among its members. By this standard, he concluded that there are some profoundly anti-humanistic tendencies behind social institutions in the modern world.

As an example, Kierkegaard took a long, critical look at the press. What bothered him most was the opportunity it afforded to combine anonymity with great power on the part of a few individuals. The tendency of power to corrupt is by no means limited to political, military, or economic power. The opportunity to influence public opinion through the

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press is an ultimate instrument of power and carries with it an ultimate temptation to misuse. Kierkegaard felt that the remedy was to establish some definite proportion between power and personal responsibility. He asked those in commanding positions in journalism to have the courage to abandon the shield of anonymity and to assume liability for policies and evaluations.

He also called for a correlative growth of critical intelligence on the part of the individual readers. His aim was not to produce "an educated public opinion," however, but rather to educate individuals to the point where they would be no longer content with being rolled together under the amorphous heading of public opinion. He taught the personalists not to perpetuate the public but to dissipate it, by making of its components intelligent and responsible individuals.

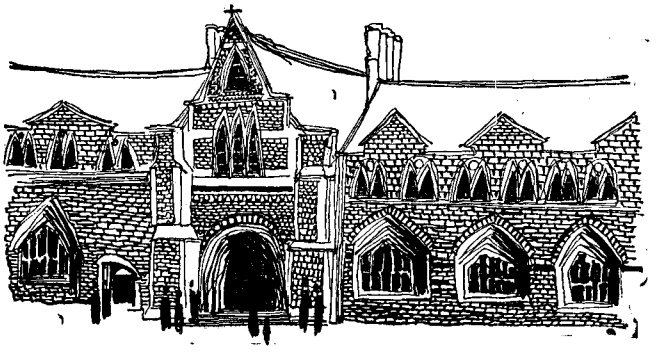
Yet Kierkegaard was also alive to the opportunity for tyranny on the part of the crowd. He inspired some of the recent existentialist studies by Jaspers and Heidegger on such staple phrases as: "Everyone is doing it," "People say it is so," and "Don't let your child be different." These mainstays of any self-respecting advertising campaign today are symptomatic of the fact that not many men really do care about becoming mature persons. They find it more comfortable to merge together into what Kierkegaard termed sample men or statistical averages. The motive for this passion of keeping in step with the next man is not merely fear or envy, however, but also a shrewd sense of the power of mass pressure. In an age when everyone supports a lobby, it is salutary to listen to Kierkegaard's plea for a social personalism, which will tame the power of anonymous man and permit human values to flourish in a free society.

THERE is a constant undercurrent of religious concern beneath all of Kierkegaard's writings. He is most interested in awakening in us a sense of God's personal closeness in all the circumstances of our existence. What Simone Weil describes as the attitude of waiting for God carries something of Kierkegaard's meaning of attending to God's providential call to each individual existent. For him, morality and religion are chiefly the story of the individual person entering into free relation with God and following Jesus Christ in the way that he is called.

Kierkegaard takes a negative stand on the desirability of a purely secular or nonreligious morality. His fundamental objection to ethical humanism as the final attitude is that it frustrates the dynamic tendencies of man toward religious existence. Karl Stern's account of the normal pattern of the unfolding of our personal capacities in reference to God and a specifically religious devotion, finds definite corroboration in the Kierkegaardian description of the way to personal existence. Many of the psychic disorders in our civilization can be traced to obstacles placed in the path of the development of the religious interest as the unifying principle of personal existence. Integration of personality cannot be achieved without giving full recognition to our tendency to establish a relationship of worship and love toward God. Kierkegaard's analyses of the breakdown and reconstruction of character point toward the need to combine ethical rectitude with religious loyalty to God, under all conditions of temporal existence.

IN our historically-minded age, Kierkegaard proclaims the close relation of history and religious faith. What distinguishes Christianity from the pagan religions, recent as well as ancient, is its historicity. Whereas Nietzsche and Sartre despair over the endless round of temporal cycles and seasons, Kierkegaard sees the meaningfulness of history in its relation to the incarnate Christ. Despite his lack of a strong sense of the Church as an historical entity, Kierkegaard does recognize that faith in the Incarnation gives an orientation and solid basis of hope to temporal existence.

He was not unaware of the sound values contained in the non-Christian religions. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard would be unable to follow along with Professor Toynbee, who in the final volumes of *A Study of History* muses about some future amalgamation of Christianity with the other high religions. Christianity is neither a high religion nor a low religion: it is not made by human hands but is the gift of God's gracious initiative. The foundation of man's historical hope is not some future pooling of the world religions, but a present realization of God's incarnate presence among us. Kierkegaard staked everything upon his conviction that Christianity cannot cease being unique and transcendent, without Christ ceasing to be what He is.



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Peron's Future

FRANCIS E. McMAHON

OF Juan Domingo Perón, President of Argentina, it can be said that he reigns but no longer rules. This has been the major consequence of the revolt of mid-June, when elements of the Navy and of the Air Force sought to overthrow the government. The revolt was quelled by army forces. A profound political change, nevertheless, occurred. Perón was saved from ouster, but only at the price of some radical concessions. The country is now governed by a military junta which is endeavoring to bring about political changes with a minimum of turmoil. Although the situation remains extremely fluid, there are good indications that a more democratic order will again prevail in Argentina.

The revolt came at the moment that the anti-Catholic campaign of the regime had been climaxed by the expulsion from the country of Bishop Manuel Tato of Buenos Aires and his assistant. The expulsion provoked the excommunication by the Vatican of the officials responsible, including President Perón. For more than seven months the regime had been assailing the Church by every means at its command, with a view to depriving it of all influence upon the political, social and educational life of the nation. It was the ruthlessness of the attack that aroused the Argentine people, especially the maltreatment of bishops and priests. Violent anti-clericalism is foreign to the spirit of the nation. Although the majority of the people are only nominally Catholic, Perón's campaign provoked a strong revulsion.

But the attack upon the Church was at best only one of the causes for the revolt. Powerful forces in Argentina had long been restive under the dictatorship. The enormous graft and corruption of the regime had offended the nostrils of countless Argentines. Repression of civil liberties had become intolerable. The deterioration of the economy had provoked widespread discontent. In September, 1951, a group of army officers had staged an abortive revolt. In July of the same year a strike of railroad workers, featured by sabotage and dynamiting, was crushed only after the proclamation of martial law and the arrest of hundreds of workers.

Power and influence under Perón had shifted from nationalistic and conservative-minded officials of the armed forces towards the leftist leaders in the government. These latter included Angel C. Borlenghi, Minister of Interior and Justice, and Eduardo Vuletich, Secretary-General of the General Confederation of Labor. Although apparently not Communist themselves, these leaders favored the Communist elements in the regime. It was they who inspired, with the full assent of Perón, the campaign against the Church. Harmony never existed between the Army and the labor confederation—the two pillars of the regime. The growing ascendency of leftist radicalism helped bring matters to a climax.

ALTHOUGH Perón has been shorn of most of his power, he is still a factor to be reckoned with. The functionaries of the powerful labor confederation are still loyal to him. Certainly, a general strike could paralyze the country. Thousands of subordinate officials in the Perónist party fully understand that their survival depends upon his survival; they have vested interests they will seek to protect. Perón also has staunch allies, for the time being at least, in a few generals, notably General Franklin Lucero. Lucero commanded the forces which quelled the revolt in June. He retains the allegiance of segments of the army strategically located in Buenos Aires.

But the military junta, reportedly headed by General José Embrioni, is being forced to take steps towards a more constitutional order owing to the opposition of a semi-rebellious Navy and Air Force. Large sections of the Army are also demanding that the Perón regime be swept away. The pressures are continuous and heavy behind the scenes. The danger of civil war has not been eliminated. The junta must satisfy the anti-Perón forces that positive steps will be taken to introduce a constitutional regime. The alternative is another and even more serious crisis.

The most striking change thus far effected by the junta has been the reversal of policy concerning the Church. One of its first measures was to permit Catholics, despite a ban on assemblies, to attend religious services on the Sunday following the revolt. Shortly afterwards, the papal nuncio, at the request of the government, conferred with the minister of foreign affairs concerning outstanding difficulties between

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Church and State. A number of other moves were made in the direction of normalizing relations between the two powers. The Church was still somewhat wary, however. Catholics had just emerged from a bitter and disillusioning experience. The Church can be expected to proceed with much circumspection in her dealings with the regime.

Ousted from the president's cabinet were two chief figures in the anti-Church campaign: Minister Borlenghi and Armando Mendez San Martin, Perón's Minister of Education. At the sub-cabinet level, Rual Apold, Secretary of Press and Information, "resigned." The head of the labor confederation, Eduardo Vuletich, also lost his post. The press campaign against the Church was halted. These changes were further indications that a new policy toward religion was emerging.

The junta prefers that "deperonization" of the regime be effected in a gradual, piecemeal fashion. It is doubtful, however, that the uncompromising opponents of Perón will be satisfied with any protracted process of "deperonization." They realize that Perón, even as nominal ruler, is capable of infinite mischief. He has survived grave crises before. In October, 1945, he was ousted and imprisoned, only to return to power a short time later with greater strength and prestige. So long as he has not completely disappeared from the scene, he remains a threat to a permanent constitutional order.

With incredible audacity, he announced on July 15 that he was discarding the robes of dictatorship, and would henceforth wear the garbs of constitutionalism. He resigned as head of his party, declaring the Peronist revolution, having achieved its objectives, was at an end. Once more he proffered the hand of friendship to the political opposition.

But the opposition had already made clear the basic conditions on which it would accept coexistence. The largest of the opposition parties, the Unión Civica Radical, demanded freedom of the press, the liberation of political prisoners, and a general amnesty. So long, said the Radicals, as actual conditions of tyranny subsist in Argentina, all political understanding will be impossible.

The Church added its potent voice to the demand for greater freedom. A pastoral letter, signed by two cardinals and twenty-two other archbishops and bishops, asserted there can be no peace in the country until all liberties are restored to the people. Cardinal Antonio Caggiano of Rosario declared in a sermon that a requisite for peace was a sound public opinion. "How can that public opinion be manifested," he asked, "without legitimate freedom of expression in the press and on the radio at the service of citizens and institutions?"

This strong defense of civil liberties is almost unprecedented in ecclesiastical circles of the Hispanic world. A new orientation at the political level is being effected. Hitherto the Argentine Church has been conservative in outlook. The crisis in Church-State relations, however, has made it clear that totalitarianism of the right can threaten the Christian way of life as much as totalitarianism of the left.

NO group in the country has been more disillusioned than the Catholic nationalists. This strong and influential minority of laity and clergymen had all but dominated Catholic social and political thinking in recent years. They were individuals who believed that Argentina's providential mission had been betrayed by liberal democracy. Their conception of the political order was theocratic; they believed statesmen were incapable of governing without the constant guidance of clergymen. They were in sympathy with the Fascism of the Thirties, even with Nazism, save as regards its anti-Catholic policy. Perón won their support because they believed they could use him as an instrument for the realization of their own ideals. Perón, on the contrary, proved to be their master. He made the nationalists his political instruments. Scores of them were discharged from governmental and educational posts after the rupture with the Church.

Within Catholicism, the chief adversaries of the nationalists have been the Christian Democrats. Buffeted for many years by the regime and eliciting little sympathy from official Catholic circles, their prestige has grown in recent months. In July, 1954, a congress of Christian Democrats proclaimed the formation of a political party to function in the underground. In recent weeks, a national committee has been set up, and several provincial committees have been formed. This recent spurt of activity is not only the result of the favorable climate for their program. The steps were taken also to ward off the attempt of the nationalists to usurp the label of Christian Democracy for a political party of their own. The nationalists, fully consonant with their intense anti-Maritainism, have denounced the followers of Maritain as "leftists." Their position compromised, and their former program discredited, the nationalists would exploit the increasing popularity of Christian Democracy for their own ends. A small number of them, apparently repentant of their mistakes of the past, have entered the authentic Christian Democrat movement.

It is evident that the tide runs strongly against Perón today. With truly Machiavellian instinct, the dictator is trying to accommodate himself to the adverse currents. It would be foolhardy to predict that he is doomed to failure in his effort to limit his losses and eventually to recoup his power. The probabilities are, however, that he is on the way out.

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THE SCREEN

SOLOMON, SOLOMON

IF ever a picture was well named, it's "The Divided Heart." The title of this fascinating English film refers to a ten-year-old boy who is torn between staying with his German parents who adopted him at the age of three, or going to Yugoslavia with his real mother from whom he was snatched by the Nazis. The story is based on a case that actually had to be settled by the United States Court of the Allied High Commission for Germany.

Producer Michael Truman photographed most of his picture in the Austrian Alps, in Germany and Yugoslavia, and Director Charles Crichton chose to handle the script (written by Jack Whittingham) in a semi-documentary fashion. The leading roles are played by actors who turn in extraordinarily sensitive performances, especially Michael Ray, as the youngster who has to choose between his two mothers, Cornell Borchers as the German mother whose love proved so effective in rehabilitating the shy, frightened child, and Yvonne Mitchell as the real mother, the Slovene who lost her husband and two daughters under Nazi rule and now wants her baby back. The supporting cast with Geoffrey Keen as the man from the International Refugee Organization, Alexander Know, Liam Redmond and Eddie Byrne as the U. S. Judges on the case, Armin Dahlen as the husband of the German mother are all excellent.

"The Divided Heart" is full of surprises both from the cinema and story point of view. It has long stretches without dialogue when the Slovene mother tells her story, the quiet understanding of the German foster-father, the contrasting of the claims of the two mothers, the reaction of the boy to the case that is revolving around him, and finally the wisdom of the judges when the mothers insist that the court should make the decision. The solution to this case seems even more difficult than Solomon's; but the U. S. Judges recognize that a ten-year-old is on the brink of giving love instead of just receiving it, and they could never be accused of momism.

THERE'S another treat in store for movie goers who want to continue their study of boys and grown-ups —but with a lot of laughs. "The Private War of Major Benson" is concerned with a couple of hundred youngsters and one grown-up boy in particular, and a major who thinks he's awfully tough and that the Army is overfed and undertrained. Because he shoots off his mouth too much, the Army fixes him, but good—and he is assigned to a military academy to put an ROTC unit on its feet. Major Benson's first shock comes when he discovers the school is run by nuns; and the second blow is that the ages of his new army run from fifteen down to six.

This picture is so full of whimsy traps that it might easily have fallen on its face, but other than the fact that it runs too long, it's one of the most delightful comedies of the year. Director Jerry Hopper steered clear of the usual clichés found in movies involving nuns, and he allows his good cast to play out the amusing situation and jokes without too much elaboration. Charlton Heston is at his best, which is very good indeed, when he's being the gruff Benson ill-at-ease with the kindly sisters who think he's great fun, or when he's completely baffled by the younger kids. One of the six-year-olds, played by Tim Hovey, almost steals the show from him a couple of times; but Benson soon learns that if you can't kill 'em, join 'em. And the boys and the nuns (Nana Bryant, Mary Field *et al*) teach him a thing or two about boys and nuns. Julie Adams handles the romantic touch in the picture, but this never gets in the way of the fun—in fact adds to it.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

OF NOTE

THE ROAD TO DESEGREGATION

THE North-Central Louisiana *Register,* publication of the diocese of Alexandria, La., [P. O. Box 589, Alexandria, La.], commenting on the establishment of a new Catholic high school in Shreveport, La., points out that the school will be open to students of all races and creeds. The *Register* then goes on to discuss certain considerations which arise in striving for the goal of total integration. Excerpts from the editorial follow:

Construction of any new school in the South these days raises almost immediately the question of desegregation. Practically, we are faced with a long tradition of segregation. It is not our purpose here to trace that history, with all its complexities, nor to analyze these realities in terms of blame or emotion.

Suffice it to state the goal or the end for which the Church is working: Complete and absolute integration of all races into every facet of our society. . . .

This goal is simply in keeping with the doctrine of the unity of the human family, the denial of a superrace, the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, and the law of justice and love toward our neighbor. . . .

Defining the goal is one thing. Reaching it is quite another. Just as those who have set as their goal the indefinite maintenance of segregation are meeting with

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difficulty, serious difficulty, in finding adequate means to effect their plan, so we, who have set the ultimate integration of all human persons into every facet of our society as our goal, are meeting with difficulty in attaining that goal. The question of means really is the crux of the question.

There are extremes. Some say that we are not progressing fast enough. They would suggest doing things precipitately—simply declare, for example, that segregation is at an end in Catholic schools and that is that. Others claim that we are moving too quickly, pressing too hard. Things will take care of themselves, they say, you cannot force things. You will do more harm than good. Note that, by and large, both these extreme views agree on the goal. They differ as to the means.

In a general way, it is obvious that both extremes are to be avoided. Simply to declare all Catholic schools integrated will not effect integration. To end up with empty classrooms is not a solution. There seems to exist, in many localities, the distinct possibility that an order from on top would result in an effective boycott of the school. In this, Catholic schools are far more democratic than public schools, since in each and every case parents must decide to send their children to such a school. No coercion is used.

Neither, on the other hand, can we subscribe to laissez-faireism. Things will not take care of themselves. They never have. We do have a mandate, both from the nature of things and from Christ through His Church, to effect as perfect a social order as possible, and that certainly imposes upon us the responsibility of choosing adequate and effective means to effect the end of total integration.

As Catholics and as Southerners who face the problem of race relations realistically, we must admit that steering a practically effective course is difficult. Reaching the goal will not be easy. The obstacles are real; the problem is vastly complex. . . .

The burden of what follows is an attempt to demonstrate the complexity of the problem and to give an inkling of the kind of decisions that we face and the general course we shall have to consider.

Here are some of the factors that enter into the making of a correct prudential judgment.

1. The ratio of White to non-White population varies greatly throughout the South and in our own North-Central Louisiana Diocese. LaSalle Parish, for example, is 11 per cent non-White; Caddo is 38 per cent; Madison, 66 per cent. It is generally agreed that it will be easier to integrate existing White schools in those areas where the proportion of non-White population is not too high.

Note some more differences in the South: Cullman County, Ala., has one per cent non-White; Tunica County, Miss., 82 per cent non-White; and Hancock County, Ga., 73 per cent non-White. This constitutes a very deciding factor not only in education but in the relations of races politically, and in other segments of society.

2. The economic status of the people, especially of the non-White component, affects greatly the over-all attitude toward integration. Generally where the non-White population is engaged in menial tasks, or in tenant farming and like occupations, there will be more difficulty than in other areas, usually urban ones, where there exist a goodly number of non-White business and professional men. Ownership of property contributes greatly to maintenance of human dignity. . . .

3. The type of existing institutions is another factor. A small town that "boasts" of complete "separate but equal" facilities in church and school will find much more difficulty breaking that pattern than another town that is growing by leaps and bounds and does not have long-standing and permanent "installations."

If we use the word "institution" in a different sense, to signify "social institution," the same factor can be observed. Patterns of segregation are more easily changed, it would seem, in a community that experiences a rapidly expanding economy with much industrialization. Usually there exists in such a community a sizable in-migration and turnover of population, people who have already grown accustomed to change.

Change is usually difficult and made only reluctantly, be it a change of house or change from an old to a new pair of shoes. But where addresses change, friends change, recreation changes, climate changes, political outlook changes, food changes, it is easy enough to understand and get used to changes in race relations.

(A young private from South Carolina did his basic training under a Negro sergeant. When asked how it worked out, he replied, "Everything in this here Army is so upside down, even that looked normal.")

Hence it is easier to integrate a new school, just a building, than to attempt to change the pattern that has existed for so long in an existing school. In time, once the break can be effected in a few schools, integration of all will become more readily accepted.

4. Not to be underestimated is the ethnic, cultural, educational, social, and moral background of both the White and non-White people of a given area. To develop this point would simply take too long here. Just one example. A White and a non-White doctor are more apt to forget racial differences in "talking shop" than others whose chief interest is small-town gossip.

5. The quality and effectiveness of leaders varies from community to community. This is true both of

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clergy and laity. In one small town in Louisiana, non-Whites are voting en masse. It is significant that the mayor of that town let it be known before the election that he would not put up with any kind of violence. Negroes were encouraged to vote.

6. Much depends on the level at which integration is attempted. All Catholic colleges and most state colleges in Louisiana have already been integrated. About 50 Negroes attended S.L.I. in Lafayette last year. With minor exceptions, everything seems to be going well. Loyola has been integrated for a long time. Catholic seminaries are all integrated. Will things go as easily at the secondary and primary levels? In other sections of the country, the pattern first broke at the primary level. But here again it is hard to judge just where it is best to begin.

Then there is the angle of "integration in reverse." Usually we think of integration of "White" schools. Recently a small Negro college in West Virginia (1,000 students) announced it would accept students from all races and 100 Whites enrolled!

How much will people sacrifice? So often it is taken for granted that Whites in the South and in our diocese will "not put up with such things." They will not, it is said, make sacrifices in order to effect integration. The fact is that our Catholic laymen, in increasingly great numbers, are willing to make generous sacrifices in money, social standing, time, effort, and whatever else is required in order to do their share in the apostolate. More and more laymen see the field of race relations as a crucial one, one that is pressing and will not wait too long. . . .

8. The desire of Negroes to integrate varies from locality to locality and group to group. By and large, the Negro wants economic equality first. The general pattern usually puts educational equality second, then religious, and social equality, when desired at all, only in very last place. It is readily understandable that there exists no solid front on the part of non-Whites as to just what they want this year, in this community, in these given circumstances.

9. Further, a judgment has to be passed on the state of perfection in grace that a given community has reached. We cannot expect uniformity. The people of some parishes simply have a better grasp of the practical need for implementing the doctrine of the Mystical Body than have others. A large percentage of the parishioners of some parishes have come to see the need for community, a true unity in Christ. Others do not even know yet what you are talking about when you utter a phrase like the "quest for community" or the "need for community" or "a problem in human solidarity." . . .

We may make a comparison with the reception of Baptism. By it a person gains innocence; he cannot yet claim virtue or maturity. By the same token it takes time and effort and growth before a community can reach the point of maturity that will prompt it not only to accept integration but positively to work for it with determination.

In so far as we cannot integrate all Catholic schools immediately, we stand under indictment that principles have not yet become incarnate in practice; all Catholics are not yet living fully Christian lives. We should not be scandalized at this. We do possess a human nature weakened by original sin. . . .

The nine points listed above are not a complete analysis of the problem of means to the end. Perhaps they do aid to understand that judgments made in this month of 1955 are all beset with difficulty and complexity. We have made a start in the realization of our goal of total integration. How complete it? Here is a matter that deserves the very best of our efforts in prayer, thought, and mutual collaboration.

COMMUNICATIONS

NON-CONFORMITY AND DEMOCRACY

Somerville, Mass.

TO the Editors: The Commonweal has established an enviable record for presenting a Christian view of man and society. . . . But in recent weeks the editors have taken positions that may need rethinking.

For example, in your editorial, "The Rights of Non-Conformity" [July 15], your basic position is that "non-conformists" and "radicals" are "persecuted" if they are arrested for disobeying the law. No one has denied the right of the twenty-nine persons in question to free speech or a free conscience. No one said they could not verbally assault the law involved before the emergency, on the way to the shelter during the emergency, or in the shelter. Admittedly, some curb was placed on their right of assembly—in the same fashion it is forbidden to assemble on busy highways or in a stranger's front parlor—but this is not unreasonable. What the law does say is that it is a misdemeanor not to take shelter when so ordered in a legally declared emergency, or to counsel others to do so. These persons were even free to commit the misdemeanor with this proviso—that they accept the consequences of violation.

"If a woman like Dorothy Day can be imprisoned," you say, "a terrible thing has happened to our country." This is true, you explain, because she and her friends are "non-conformists" and "the rights of non-conformity are an index to the free society's well-being." But Dorothy Day, whatever her motives, broke the law and a free society cannot endure if citizens may break the law, for whatever reason, and

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be immune from punishment. All lawbreakers are non-conformists. Non-conformity is protected in this country, though not always understood or appreciated, as long as the non-conformist gives due respect to the law by obeying it. We still have the ballot to change the laws and the courts to see that only those who violate them are convicted.

The judge here may have been vicious and stupid, the bail may have been high, the penalty provided may be excessive, but these things have little to do with non-conformity. They are found in countless cases where radicals are not involved. There are ways to combat bad laws in a democracy without breaking them. Certainly The Commonweal, which a few months ago counseled Americans to obey a marriage law in Spain because it was the law of that land, takes a strange position in now condoning the breaking of a law here.

Again, in the issue of June 24, your comment on "The Dice Are Slightly Loaded," by John Cort, is downright irrelevant. Cort complains that, in Congress, rural members represent fewer votes than urban ones, and Southerners than Northerners. In so doing, you say, he "raises again" the questions, "to what extent does the strengthening of democracy depend on widening the direct representation of the people" and "to what degree is government made more responsible by increasing the number of those who share directly in its decisions?"

Mr. Cort does not raise such questions at all, even indirectly. He does not suggest adding a single voter to the rolls or making the representation any more direct. Senators and Representatives are already elected directly by the people and every adult person is privileged, if not always allowed to vote. In 1913, in Amendment 17, the people settled the question you're discussing when they provided that Senators be elected by the people rather than by State Legislatures. Is it even possible to widen the "direct representation" of the people any more, aside from lowering the voting age?

Mr. Cort merely suggests that it is unfair for one man's vote to be greater in its effect than another's. Does your "conservative" position mean you believe Southerners are entitled to a more influential vote than Northerners; that farmers are more qualified as voters than city folk?

While most of Mr. Cort's article was about the House (where your comments make no sense because it is already directly elected and the Constitution provides that Representatives be apportioned by population), he did briefly mention the Senate. He noted that the Constitution (in Article 5) made change impossible (he should have emphasized that this is the one unamendable provision in the Constitution). Consequently your discussion was academic. Moreover your description of the Senate as a body "free from direct pressure" was inaccurate. A Senator serves six years, a Representative only two, so the former must bow to his electorate less frequently. But this has nothing to do with widening or limiting democracy.

You quote Mr. Lippmann as saying, "The current sickness of democracy is an excess of democracy," and declare "we have learned . . . that majorities can impose a tyranny more terrible than absolute monarchs ever devised." Both points are debatable. Recent tyrannies—Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Franco, Mao—were imposed by minorities through force and trickery and only later compelled, or faked, majority support. Indeed tyranny has been most successfully resisted in those countries where the majority rules; most tyrannies were built on the shambles of earlier ones.

The real "sickness" of democratic, representative government in a nation-state is that it is incapable of both preserving freedom and protecting its people from other nation-states in a world where they are able to war on one another. The obsolete nation-state and old fashioned diplomacy based on unenforceable promises are the root of democracy's sickness today. Both The Commonweal and Mr. Lippmann might consider that democracy can only work in a governed world where it is not constantly at the mercy of external enemies and internal fear.

"Liberalism's dreams" may be "finished" as you say, but mankind's are not. A better world, even a governed world, is still possible. Men may not become saints but they can build the institution of government that can curb the sinners. We may not have the utopia you say was promised, but more men are free from oppression and poverty today than were so blessed three hundred years ago and, in this country, most of us live as only the kings did then. The dreams of many dreamers did come true. Must The Commonweal abandon all dreams because perfection is not possible?

WILLIAM H. WELLS.

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Art and Modern Criticism

MICHAEL HARRINGTON

MODERN criticism, like modern art, is introspective, theoretical, epistemological. It reminds one of Gide's *Counterfeiters* where a character in a novel is writing about a character in a novel. Yet despite its narcissist obsession, contemporary criticism has produced a significant—perhaps an unrivaled—body of work. Its practice has been formalist to the point where it treats a poem or play like the cubist does a still life, disintegrating, analyzing, and, often enough, distorting. In the process, a major revision of poetic taste and tradition has been accomplished, the literary moralizers have been routed, foreign influences have been assimilated.

In all of this, the most intriguing aspect is the dominance of formalism. Unless one can account for this fact and assess its significance, it is practically impossible to discuss literary theory today. The publication of a new book, *Creation and Discovery* by Eliseo Vivas [Noonday, $5.], raises this basic problem, first because Vivas makes an accurate definition of formalism, secondly because he dissents from it.

The formalist "school" in the United States is a loose literary coalition usually called the New Criticism. Its theoreticians—men like John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Mark Schorer, Cleanth Brooks, and others —have divergent opinions on a wide range of matters, but on one thing they are agreed: the study of literature is primarily the study of its mode of expression, its way of saying, and not of what is being said.

Mark Schorer summed up this attitude in the first issue of the *Hudson Review*. He wrote: "Modern criticism has shown us that to speak of content is not to speak of art at all, but of experience; and that it is only when we speak of the *achieved* content, the form, the work of art, that we speak as critics."

Various critical and aesthetic theories have been advanced to support this view. Almost all of them center around definition of the symbol. In Susanne Langer's *Feeling and Form,* for instance, there is an important statement of this kind of analysis. Mrs. Langer differentiates sharply between a sign, which communicates and therefore refers primarily to something outside of itself, and a symbol, which is self-contained and concentrates our interest upon itself. The road-marker must be informative; it need not be aesthetic. The poem must be symbolic; it need not be informative. From this basic distinction, it is an easy step to a critical concern with technique—with "*achieved* content."

The fact that this theory focuses on the term, symbol, is suggestive of its historical origins. For the genesis of this approach is most clearly seen in the development of French symbolism. Here, the context of the alienation of the artist from his society, which is the pre-condition of "pure" theories of art, is present in classic relief.

Blackmur has generalized this phenomenon as one in which the "great society," the ruling class concerned with art, is engulfed by the mass society. The result, as he describes it, is "that monster, the pure individual." In France, this process is abundantly clear even in that most bourgeois of art-forms, the novel: Balzac is motivated by a passionate hatred of the new order, and Flaubert concludes *Madame Bovary* with the ironic triumph of the bourgeois.

But above all, this historical development becomes plain in the course of nineteenth century French poetry: in symbolism. For Baudelaire, Verlaine and Rimbaud, alienation is tortured and explicit; for Mallarmé, poetry is an act of fantastic purity. Thus, in Mallarmé, words are seen approaching the imprecise suggestiveness of music; meaning, the manifest content, is totally subordinated to the explosive latency of the symbol.

Relating this development of pure poetic theory to the alienation of the artist from society is hardly new. Yet I think it needs only one important qualification. In his *Social History of Art,* Arnold Hauser points out that the concern with technique associated with the art-for-art's-sake movement also results from the accommodation of the artist to society, i.e. to a rational, technique-oriented industrial society. Yet given this modification, the original model stands: the immediate tradition which produced formalism was that of French symbolism, and its genesis is intimately related to the rise of bourgeois society and the concomitant emergence of the artist as *déclassé,* whether he be bohemian or revolutionary.

ELISEO Vivas dissents from this dominant formalist point of view. In doing so, he reveals some magnificent insights, yet these are contained

Mr. Harrington writes frequently on cultural and political matters for this and other publications.

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within a philosophic context which at times verges on the irresponsible.

To begin with, Vivas does not reject the distinction which Mrs. Langer makes, the distinction between symbol and sign. What he does do is to reject the notion that the symbol is, *in all of its aspects,* self-contained and irrelevant to reality. Thus, he writes: ". . . what poetry uniquely does is to reveal a world which is self-sufficient. It does not communicate in the ordinary sense of the term, nor does it imitate or designate existent or imaginary things which can be apprehended independently of the poem. By means of the self-sufficient world that poetry reveals we are able to grasp, as the poem lingers in memory as a redolence, the actual world in which we live."

And a little later he remarks: "It is true that the artist makes something new out of the stuff of his experience . . . and it may also be true that the work of art exists only in the aesthetic transaction. But from these facts it does not follow that the reader cannot carry out of the transaction and into the world of affairs the informed substance of the work to use it for his own non-aesthetic purposes."

With this general approach, I am in almost complete agreement. I feel, as Vivas does, that the basic theoretical contribution of the New Critics, the insistence upon art as art and the rejection of art as science, art as politics, must be accepted and used. But this can be taken too far: it can imply the irrelevance of art to the world. Some of the New Critics have been uncomfortable about this implication—Cleanth Brooks, for example, in the *Well Wrought Urn* expresses considerable doubts—but none of them have faced up to the fact squarely. This Vivas has done, and done well.

But when we go to the philosophic context in which Vivas does this—perhaps philosophic temper would be a better phase—there is little to welcome. Vivas is a partisan, and his enemy is positivism. In the heat of battle, he tends to become irresponsible. Thus: ". . . the positivists want [the world] which is already half born, the louring world of 1984 and beyond it (for the kind of hell we are in for cannot last forever) the worse hell of 632 A.F." And again: "Our critics are, one and all, endowed with considerable talent. . . But . . . our critics are for the most part philosophically pauperized and are, hence, devoid of a coherent sense of the place of man in society, the place of society in history, and the relation of history to the universe. It is no wonder, therefore, that they should have only the most trivial notions of the use of literature."

Now positivism is no sacred cow and neither is literary formalism. But when Vivas holds that positivists, Deweyites, et al., *want* totalitarianism, he exceeds the bounds of decorum, responsibility and fact. To say that Milton was unconsciously drawn to Satan is one thing; to accuse him of celebrating Black Masses is another. Again, one can agree that the New Critics are somewhat deficient in historical sense, yet their very accomplishment almost *a priori* excludes the judgment that they have "only the most trivial notions of the use of literature."

This petulance and arrogance is unfortunate. For Vivas does make a real contribution to aesthetic and critical theory. He is concerned with a very important lop-sidedness in formalist criticism and his solution is, in broad terms, an excellent one. But when he adopts the shrill tone of the Little Lenin Library he seriously mars his own worth.

In Socialist Realism, art is the mere technique of a leaflet. In formalism there is a dangerous tendency toward seeing the work of art as divorced from non-asethetic meaning. Between the two, there is a mean which grants to art its integrity and yet insists upon its relevance.

It is not at all necessary to adopt a theory of one-to-one representationalism in order to be dissatisfied with theories which lead to total non-representationalism. Indeed, as I mentioned before, one must begin with a knowledge of the unique mode of existence of the symbolic. Otherwise, art ceases to be art, and becomes neurosis or zeitgeist or a copy-book of maxims.

But at the same time, art is in and of the world. It communicates; it makes us see differently. This does not mean that it is discursive: it obviously is not. It does indicate, however, that a poem not only *is* but also *means*. The critical task today is to define the second part of the question: how does art communicate? It is simple enough to see that it does; what is difficult is to determine how it does, how we can assimilate the content without destroying the achievement.

To do this is to go against the times, for the times sympathize with formalism. Yet, in the shattered world in which we live this task of synthesis is a necessity.

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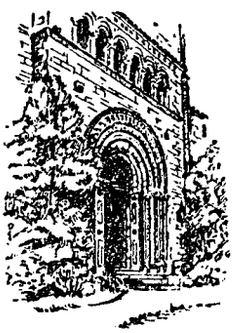

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The Spiritual Resources of Democracy

DECLARATION OF FREEDOM. By Elton Trueblood. Harper. $1.50.

By WILL HERBERG

ELTON Trueblood here addresses himself to what is perhaps the crucial problem of the West confronted with the global challenge of Communism: how to release the inner dynamic of democracy and make it serve as a decisive force in the fateful struggle for the future.

As Mr. Trueblood sees it, the problem is twofold: (1) The appeal of totalitarianism is positive, direct, and simple, however delusive; can we make our democratic appeal come forth with the same simplicity, directness, and unequivocal affirmation? (2) Communism is "a well-organized tyranny that becomes a conspiracy in other countries," but "it is also a religion," with its creed, its church," and its all-embracing faith, however perverted; can we meet this demonic faith with a better faith, this idolatrous allegiance with a true and more authentic dedication?

Mr. Trueblood says yes, and he goes on to document his position with a concise presentation of a "Declaration of Freedom" that he hopes will reveal the power of the democratic appeal and the substance of the democratic creed. Communism utilizes the genuine needs and strivings of the "hitherto exploited populations" for its own ends, but "the exciting news is that all of the understandable and legitimate human demands [of these populations] may be magnificently met by a free society, *providing those in it understand their own creed and can make it understandable to those whose search for answers is so insistent.*"

What this creed is Mr. Trueblood proceeds to outline in three vigorous chapters. He formulates six, "positive freedoms"—to learn, to debate, to worship, to work, to live, and to serve—and then goes on to balance these with the "idea of equality" in three forms, equality of opportunity, of justice, and of suffrage. The capstone of the structure he finds in the "dignity of the individual," in its political, economic, and "racial" applications. As the reader will see, there is nothing particularly new in this creed, but that is precisely Mr. Trueblood's point: it is, he repeatedly insists, the perennial meaning of democracy that must be brought forth, consciously affirmed, and proclaimed to the world. So formulated and presented, the author thinks, the "Declaration of Freedom" can engender the dynamism and revolutionary power to defeat Communism without the terrible peril of all-out war.

Mr. Trueblood argues his case with vigor, clarity, and conviction; nor does he ever lapse into mere "idealistic" phrasemongering, for he knows how to relate abstract ideals to concrete needs and problems, and is not afraid to do so. Yet certain questions touching upon his overall thesis remain. How, for one, thing, can the American democratic creed be disengaged from the narrow, self-satisfied complacency of the American business community (including our "business-minded" workers as well), as disengaged it must be if it is to exert a revolutionary appeal among the "have-nots" of the world? How, for another, can a pluralistic, open society, operating pragmatically to maintain a shifting balance of freedom, order, and justice ever develop a creed as simple, positive and unequivocal as the creeds of totalitarianism undoubtedly are? Can, indeed, an open democratic society make pretensions to such a final and self-contained creed without in some way ceasing to be democratic?

The author himself appreciates the reality of the problem—"it is only fair to admit," he points out, "that the philosophical task of the free society is more difficult than is the corresponding task in a controlled system . . . for two chief reasons: first, the free system is necessarily more complex . . . [and] in the second place . . . the free society is varied"—but nowhere is this issue adequately discussed.

Finally, what is our creed? Communism is, or claims to be, a single monolithic ideology in which the economic, the political, and the "philosophical" (that is, the religious) are fused. Mr. Trueblood emphasizes that "the basic ideas of democracy . . . [are] moral ideas," and that morality requires religion, so that the program of democracy in all its aspects is ultimately grounded in a religious world-view. That may well be true, but is it not equally true that in a democracy the various levels of life have their relative autonomy, so that the whole cannot be reduced to one "ism," not even a religious "ism"? Communism has its integrally Communist solutions for men's problems, economic, political, social, and spiritual alike; but, taking the religion in which our democracy is ultimately grounded as Jewish-Christian faith, can we say that we have a specifically Jewish-Christian solution to men's problems in the economic, political, and social order?

Hardly so; on each of these levels we try to find the appropriate kind of solution—the "mixed economy" in economics, the "open society" in politics—ultimately related to our religious world-view, no doubt, but at shorter range broad enough and autonomous enough to include the "unbeliever" as well, provided only he is committed to the open, responsible society against the closed society of totalitarianism. Democracy cannot possibly fuse religion and economics and politics into one ideology in order to achieve concentrated striking power against Communism; to do so would be to vitiate religion no less than to stultify democracy itself.

These are some of the questions that emerge from Mr. Trueblood's discussion of democracy's ideological problems and tasks in the face of the totalitarian challenge. They are not answered in these pages, but this small, significant volume does succeed in focusing them for our thought and attention.

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Faith and Human Society

CHRISTIANITY IS REVOLUTIONARY. By Maurice Fraigneux. Translated by Emma Crauford. Newman. $2.75.

By THOMAS P. COFFEY

THE divine, redemptive element in the Church is not destined merely to survive. It must live, constantly re-adapting itself to the forms and customs of a changing society, continually reinvigorating the material through the spiritual energy with which it is charged. Now life is change; and change in society, Maurice Fraigneux reminds us, is revolution, or renewal. Thus, Christianity, in this sense, is a revolution.

The agonizing incoherence of society is but the setting for the divine intention to realize, despite the weaknesses and vacillations of men, the fulfillment of a plan to restore humanity to its sublime vocation. In this small volume the author gives us a concise and well-organized study of the recurrent adaptation of spiritual and moral truth to the constantly expanding frontiers of mankind. His progressive clarification of the doctrines of the immortality of the soul and the worth of the human person as well as of the ideals of social justice make up a study of truths which exercised a profound influence in the ancient kingdom of God among the Jews. As he points out, the Jew's realization of the necessity for a vivifying religious faith in human, social, and political activities was the occasion for the first important enlargement of perspective among men.

The resulting new direction of man in history was, however, but a prefiguring of that of the New Testament. Fraigneux indicates how the revolution effected by Christ and His Apostles was the basis for all future developments of religion and philosophy among men: the relations between faith and knowledge, liberty and authority, piety and formalism. These developments, the author shows, actually were brought to partial fulfillment through the work of the saints.

The trends he traces in his summary of sacred history appear, however, to be but a point of departure for M. Fraigneux, whose preoccupation with the spirit of poverty and social justice reveals his basic concern with the responsibility of the Church in our own era. M. Fraigneux holds that while civilization and cultures are in flux under the pressure of distrust, mutual recrimination and corroding anxiety, the Church is called upon to unite the aspirations of East and West in a synthesis more favorable to the "new society" of the plebeian workers and less so to the "decadent" bourgeoisie.

While the purport of M. Fraigneux's thinking is by no means obscure at this turn in his argument, his terminology fails at times to disclose the practical measures by which his ideological convictions would be made effective. We are asked to work for a rapprochement of East and West in a realignment which would harmonize the Christian ideals of personality with a more rigid enforcement of the canons of social justice and of human fraternity. In his view, there should be a new social orientation of human energy without, however, any contradiction of the demands of individual human dignity.

Yet M. Fraigneux is not always clear about the practical implementation of this new orientation. Shall we return to the "communal ideal" of the *Acts,* or does a "more fruitful evolution" lie before us in which "historical elements shall receive their proper balance?" In a significant passage, he rejoices that "the cult of money has been replaced by that of work." But who, definitely, are those who have abandoned the "cult of money" and replaced it with that of work? And what, specifically, are the new social classes, recently liberated, who, he says, will soon take the controls of civilization into their hands and give it a new character—classes which, he declares, have recently gained a victory over the bourgeoisie and have already attained their social and political autonomy?

"This operation," M. Fraigneux suggests, "should now proceed to the progressive elaboration of a framework of plebeian and exotic aspirations." We are warranted in asking for a more concrete explanation of the "framework" to which he refers. On all these points, M. Fraigneux is more eloquent than he is precise. But whatever the nature of the new revolution may be, M. Fraigneux has made a thoughtful analysis of certain basic problems which Christian civilization must face in a future that will be dangerous and full of challenge.

Exploring the Divine Comedy

INTRODUCTORY PAPERS ON DANTE. Dorothy L. Sayers. Harper. $4.

By SERGE HUGHES

OUT of a lively concern for Christian theology and ethics Dorothy Sayers has written a number of erratic essays that are among the finest introductory notes on Dante available today in English. In a reassuringly conversational vein, made authoritative by an erudition capable of dealing intelligently or briefly with some contemporary French and British scholarship on Dante, Miss Sayers goes about building an earnest and convincing case for the recognition of the importance of Dante's theology and ethics as indispensable aids for the understanding of his poetry.

This approach is no doubt sensitive and sensible and far more attractive than that of critics who, not at all bent by moral and philosophical problems, walk past the architraves of the poem in unperturbed ignorance, intent only on a close scrutiny of the details of a beaded moulding. Such critics talk a great deal about pure poetry, about the universal appeal of certain lines that, far from requiring one interpretation, find a confirmation of

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their poetical genius in the test of all great poetry: its inexhaustible perennial ambiguity.

Miss Sayers will have none of this criticism. She came to Dante not out of a need for pure poetry but at the suggestion of Charles Williams, a "lay theologian" who knew of her theological and ethical interests. She came to Dante with the well-defined theological convictions of an Anglican whose doctrines are not at all poetically ambiguous.

Thus, when she writes in amused scorn of the perversions of Dante's meaning by critics who have not bothered to try to understand Dante, but have rather used the "Divine Comedy" as a beautiful vase into which they can pour their own feelings, one cannot but assent.

But holy wrath is a perilous balance and, to the reader's consternation, Miss Sayers, carried away perhaps by moralistic fervor, writes some foolish things.

Not content with condemning those critics who will not take Dante's theology and philosophy seriously, she lumps together master and disciples and castigates equally a number of English critics who fancy themselves Croceans and Benedetto Croce—somewhat like a historian of philosophy who, alert to phonetic similarities, would bracket the neo-Thomism of the XVIIth century with the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Nor does Miss Sayers add to the understanding of Dante, one of the most gigantically complex personalities of all time, by implying that he successfully resolved every speculative problem his adventurous spirit encountered. Dante was never so serene, nor so satisfied, nor was he, of all people, the embodiment of a perfect fusion between faith and reason. It should be sufficient to point out that Dante tried to resolve antinomies without insisting that he was always successful.

Aside from these shortcomings, preferable in any case to those of other modern critics, and apart from an understandable difficulty in conveying the marvelous exuberance and robustness of Dante, the temper of this collection of essays makes it profitable reading for all those who would perfect their love of Dante by a knowledge of him. The chapter on the humor of Dante, especially, is a superb work of analysis, Miss Sayers at her very best: this reviewer knows nothing to match it in modern English scholarship.

All reservations aside, in presenting these essays Miss Sayers can say proudly with her master poet, *Posto ti ho dinnanzi. . . .*

Peasant Poetry

THE RURAL MUSE: Studies in the Peasant Poetry of England. By Rayner Unwin. Macmillan. $3.50.

By VIVIAN MERCIER

FRANKLY, besides having a rather special subject, this is not a very good book. Why review it, then? Because it straddles the borderline between literature and sociology, both of which, I take it, are matters of concern to most of The Commonweal's readers.

Mr. Unwin, who writes as an essayist rather than a literary or social historian, is handicapped by a style which lacks ease and grace. His other main handicap is diffidence about the importance of his subject: the English peasant poets, unlike Burns, are not first-rate, so Mr. Unwin offers as his chief justification the fact that no one has written a book about all of them before. In trying to avoid the over-enthusiasm of the specialist, he may have sold his poets short.

Besides showing more respect for his poets, Mr. Unwin ought to have stressed the sociological aspect of his subject far more than he has done. For instance, a comparison with Lowland Scotish poetry might have illuminated the very different development of the English rural muse. Did the absence of a class of peasant proprietors cripple the growth of a rural culture in England? The Scotish situation doesn't throw much light here, for Burns, like his father, started life as a rack-rented tenant farmer. Much more harmful, probably, was the contempt into which the rural dialects of English fell at the Renaissance, when the English of the Court replaced Latin as the language of learning and literature. Scottish nationalism kept up the prestige of Lowland Scots; furthermore, as David Daiches points out, the great Edinburgh philosophers *spoke* broad Scots, though they *wrote* standard English; hence there was an audience for dialect literature.

Lacking the pride conferred by nationalism or by economic independence, the true English peasant poet wrote poetry in order to escape from his class. No wonder, then, that he wasn't an innovator: in order to be accepted by the educated classes, he followed the prevailing literary fashion as closely as his poor education and limited reading would permit. Stephen Duck and George Crabbe used their literary gifts quite unashamedly—or rather, with pride—to raise their social status; both achieved their aim by becoming clergymen of the Church of England. It is to Crabbe's eternal credit that he did not tone down his grim picture of country life to flatter the class he aspired to enter.

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After universal primary education had been introduced in England, it seemed unlikely that any peasant poet could write for long without becoming a middle-class intellectual. Yet Alfred Williams, a twentieth-century country boy who commuted to Swindon as a factory worker and later became a market gardener, never declassed himself. Ironically, his poetry differed little from the rural poetry written by the Georgian Poets, all professional literary men.

To this day, dialect and accent emphasize, or even establish, class divisions in English life. I think Mr. Unwin takes this fact far too much for granted, as he does the other sociological fact that for centuries most of the manual labor on English farms has been carried out by landless laborers rather than peasant proprietors or feudal serfs, so that the typical English peasant poet is a proletarian of sorts.

Mr. Unwin could surely have offered some penetrating criticism of theories about proletarian literature. It is hard to realize, while reading his in some ways quite adequate book, that on every page he skirts topics which possess, or recently possessed, burning interest for the twentieth-century literary and social critic. Fundamentally, his failure stems from a lack of intellectual curiosity.

Missing Link?

THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN. By Ralph Izzard. Doubleday. $4.

By JOHN COURNOS

THERE is little left in this world to discover, laments Mr. Izzard at the end of a book which records the failure of his expert mountain climbers to find upon the heights of the Himalayas the fabulous Yeti. The Yeti, or abominable Snowmen as they are popularly known, are creatures which are supposed to be neither men nor apes but presumably fall somewhere in between the two. Had the expedition been able to discover this alleged "missing link" it would have been, the author submits, a momentous event in the

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world of science. But the idea has not been given up; another expedition with the same object in view is already under way.

Mr. Izzard had the first inkling of his future undertaking while acting in a journalistic capacity in expeditions on Mount Everest; he became interested in mysterious footprints reported by scientists as well as the natives. For decades it had been bruited about that strange creatures had been seen in the higher altitudes of the slopes of Everest. But, they would have nothing to do with human beings, evading them at every encounter.

The descriptions of the creatures have been various; their reported height has been anywhere from five to eight feet. Nearly all accounts collated by Mr. Izzard agree that the Yetis walk upright, but get down on all fours when in a hurry. His head is supposed to be conical, long and narrow at the top, with a hairless face, while the rest of his body is covered with brown hair.

One hypothesis holds that the creature may be a genuine aborigine. In discussing the possibility of capturing a specimen, the author asks: "What if the Yeti proved an ape-man rather than a man-ape?" Mr. Izzard had no intention of capturing a Yeti to take him out of the country, but rather of studying him on the spot and reporting his findings to the civilized world. Actually, it is a question of getting a look at him.

The expedition was singularly unfortunate in this. Its members found plenty of tracks but, for one reason or another, they never led them to anything. Besides these tracks they found hairs, and even droppings, which they analyzed; but that is as far as it went. From preliminary records which the author went to infinite trouble to gather he had a right to expect something better in the way of results. The expedition on behalf of the London *Daily Mail* was months in preparation, and the hunt itself occupied five months and cost a heap of effort and money. All accounts agree that the abominable Snowman is an intelligent fellow, and it is quite clear from the narrative that he used his intelligence to elude those intent on making his acquaintance.

REVIEWERS

Will Herberg is the author of *Judaism and Modern Man*.

Thomas P. Coffey, with his review of *Christianity Is Revolutionary*, makes his first appearance in The Commonweal.

Serge Hughes teaches at St. John's University in Brooklyn.

Vivian Mercier writes on literature for The Commonweal and other magazines.

John Cournos is a well known critic and anthologist.

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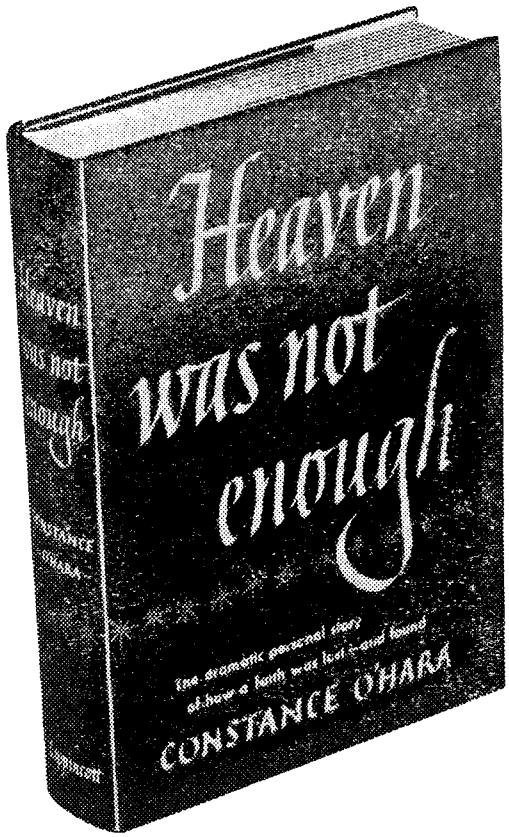

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